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In Memoriam: Marc Meyer (1954–2015)

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Figure 1. Marc Meyer 2006 (photo: C. Harbusch).

Marc Theo Jean Meyer was born on November 29, 1954 in Luxembourg, and he died on February 28, 2015 in Merzig, Saarland, much too early, at the age of only 60 years. Nevertheless, he has left a remarkable legacy with almost 100 scientific publications and extensive entomological collections, as shall be pointed out in this obituary.

After attending primary and secondary schools in Luxembourg he received his high school diploma in 1974 and began his studies in biology and geography at the University of the Saarland. He was one of those exceptional students who was not motivated by the syllabuses of the subjects taught to him, as he had already acquired much of the knowledge involved. Even as a schoolboy he had published scientific contributions in "Entomologische Zeitschrift" and "Bulletin de la Société des Naturalistes Luxembourgeois" (1972, 1973). It is mentioned there that it was his father Jean Meyer who inspired his love of nature and who accompanied him on almost all of his early entomological excursions. Already as a pupil he had founded an entomological working group "Jeunesse Naturaliste du Luxembourg" in 1972, and he was twice prize-winner of the contest "Jugend forscht".

In his studies, apart from entomology, he was most interested in lectures on zoogeography. During excursions to France (Champagne and Provence) in 1976 and to the Pyrenees in 1979 he had to record the observed and collected Lepidoptera (Fig. 2). Figure 3 shows him reporting about Lepidoptera to members of the natural history societies Delattinia of the Saarland and to those of Luxembourg at the nature reserve Hammelsberg near Perl in 1981.

He finished his studies by taking the state examination for teaching in high schools in 1979. The topic of his treatise "Systematic and chorological investigations of the Rhopalocera-fauna of São

Figure 2. Marc as a student on a biogeographical excursion in 1976 (photo: H. Schreiber).

Sebastião", a south-Brazilian coastal island, was chosen by his supervisor Prof. Paul Müller, who had visited the island for herpetological studies in 1964, 1965, and 1967. Lepidoptera, collected by him for Prof. de Lattin, had not previously been evaluated. Marc Meyer had to prepare the material as a first step. He then identified the specimens very carefully as can be seen by the fact that he consulted well-known specialists of South American Lepidoptera (Keith Brown, Olaf Mielke, and Heinz Ebert) in cases where he was not certain. Altogether, 95 butterflies from the island of 335 square km were treated in detail with respect to their differences from the mainland populations.

At the same time the treatise laid the foundation for his lifelong interest in the biogeography of islands. In excursions to Madeira, to the Azores, and the Canaries and in publications (1991, 1993, 1995, 1997), with co-authors (1990, 1997, 1998), he later on became concerned with the Lepidoptera of the Macaronesian isles and collected extensive material from there. It was his intention to write a thesis in that field. However, the chances to do so were not only much limited by his professional duties but also by his obvious honourable awareness that he had not studied for a doctorate.

After the probationary period at the technical lyceums Michel-Lucius in Luxembourg and Mathias Adams in Pétange in 1981, he obtained and held the position of Curator for Entomology at the Museum for Natural History in Luxembourg until his retirement owing to illness after 28 years of service in 2013. Building reconstruction was carried out where his office had been during the time of his employment and a new building of the Museum was opened in 1996. Little space, however, existed for the collections in his charge in a compact installation within the museum itself. A larger part is out-housed to a warehouse in Kehlen near Capellen in SW Luxembourg and which had to be visited by him in his work. It was his main task to register the fauna of Luxembourg, especially the Lepidoptera. His work is documented by regular publications mainly from the working group for invertebrate research (1981, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993), partly together with co-authors (1979, 1984) – see below. His commitment in mapping European invertebrates can be seen from the publication "Atlas Provisoire des Insects du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg", published together with A. Pelles in 1981.

Being multilingual, Marc was the ideal person for the position of the General Secretary of the "European Invertebrate Survey" (EIS), a position he held for 12 years. The task made it necessary for him to travel regularly to other countries, e.g. to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. It involved

Figure 3. Marc demonstrating Lepidoptera at the nature reserve Hammelsberg near Perl in 1981 (photo: H. Schreiber).

furthermore the organization of congresses. He founded a cross-border working group of experts for Lepidoptera in 2001 and organized several "days of entomology of the Sar-Lor-Lux-Region".

He was a member of relevant professional societies such as SNL in Luxembourg and was responsible for the compilation of "Paiperlék" for many years. He was a member of the natural history society "Delattinia" of the Saarland, the "Société Entomologique" of Mulhouse and subscriber of "Oreina (Les Papillons du France)"; he was member of "SHILAP" in Spain and of "Societas Europaea Lepidopterologica" (SEL). He hosted the SEL Congress in Luxembourg together with the team of the Invertebrate section of the museum in 2011.

Marc was awarded the orders of "officier de l'ordre de mérite" and "officier de l'ordre Grand Ducal de la Couronne de Chéne" for his scientific work and his manifold engagement in organization by the State of Luxembourg.

Of his publications the revision of the European populations of *Lycaena helle* (1981–1982) has first to be mentioned. *Lycaena helle* (violet copper) is a glacial relict with many peculiarities. He had published repeatedly on this species (1980) and reported about it at the SEL Congress in Cambridge in 1982 (1985).

It is of great merit that with his co-editors Jan Habel and Thomas Schmitt a volume of 235 pages concerning this extremely endangered species was published by 2014. Nineteen contributions of authors from all of Europe deal with biogeography, ecology, and questions of conservation. The volume was published in English by Pensoft in Sofia (2014). It bears the title "Jewels in the Mist" since the violet copper can be found on wet meadows with *Polygonum bistorta*, which are certainly often enveloped in mist. It is amazing how he even found the time for any private life given the huge number of excursions to countries like Morocco, Australia, Ecuador, and Costa Rica in addition to the islands of Macaronesia. The voucher material collected from the Sar-Lor-Lux-region is stored in the Museum of Natural History in Luxembourg while exotic material and such from Macaronesia collected on private excursions has been transferred to "Delattinia" for further studies.

Marc married Dr. Christine Harbusch in 1999. They had become acquainted at the Natural History Museum of Luxembourg. They renovated and moved into a farmhouse in Perl-Kesslingen and shared it with several larger and smaller animals in the course of time. Marc accepted with tolerance his home turning more and more into a sort of charity hostel for animals without realizing that he himself would one day become an invalid because of illness.

We were able to celebrate with him his retirement from office in February 2013 and his 60th birthday, when he was already in a nursing home in Beckingen, in November 2014.

We feel grateful for his legacy and will keep Marc in great honour.

Acknowledgements

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